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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 001579

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/16/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [EAIC](#) [KDEM](#) [KWMN](#) [LE](#)  
SUBJECT: MGLE01: A/S SILVERBERG MEETING WITH UN SYG REP  
GEIR PEDERSEN

REF: BEIRUT 1540

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR JEFFREY D. FELTMAN. REASON: SECTIONS 1.4 (B)  
AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: IO A/S Silverberg hosted UN envoy Geir Pedersen to a relaxed dinner on 5/16. Pedersen had no definitive answer regarding why Hizballah had stepped up the construction of military infrastructure along the Blue Line, but he argued that Hizballah tried to maintain "constructive ambiguity" to keep Israel somewhat off balance. He said that Hizballah tries to balance its Iranian ties with a Lebanese agenda. On Sheba'a Farms, Pedersen agreed that definition of the territory in question and guarantees of disarmament are needed before Israel can be expected to take seriously any proposal for withdrawal. Regarding UNIFIL renewal, Pedersen expressed hope that the upcoming UNIFIL report might have details the UNSC could cite as benchmarks in any new resolution. End Summary.

HIZBALLAH SEEKS CREATIVE AMBIGUITY  
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12. (C) Accompanied by the Ambassador and PAO, A/S Silverberg on 5/16 recounted for UN Secretary General's Personal Representative for Lebanon Geir Pedersen and his assistant Salman Shaikh, her visit to UNIFIL headquarters that morning. Pedersen affirmed UNIFIL Force Commander General Alain Pellegrini's assesment of increased construction in Hizballah positions on the Lebanese side of the Blue Line. In response to A/S Silverberg's question about Hizballah's motives, Pedersen assessed that Hizballah's message to the Israelis was that the resistance was well funded, had plenty of resources, and that as a result Israel could "never rest." Pedersen repeated Pellegrini's hypotheses that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) had not objected to the new construction either because they hoped one day to take possession of the sites, or -- more worrying -- because LAF elements were quietly cooperating with Hizballah on the construction.

13. (C) Pedersen noted that Hizballah believed they had caused Israel to reduce its overflights during the month of April; he did not have an explanation for the spike in Israeli overflights in May. Pedersen said he had warned his Hizballah contacts against any actions to heat up the Blue Line, arguing it would not serve anyone's interest. Any action would be used as proof to the Lebanese that Hizballah

was a tool of Iran, rather than a Lebanese party. Asserting that Hizballah feared a strong, international community stand against them, Pedersen assessed that Hizballah preferred to maintain a state of constructive ambiguity. Attempts to unnerve Israel rendered the situation more unstable and thus more difficult for both Israel and the international community to retain the focus on disarmament. Nevertheless, Pedersen acknowledged that some in Hizballah are beginning to recognize that for Hizballah to play a role in Lebanon in the future, there must be disarmament.

¶4. (C) Responding to a question from A/S Silverberg, Pedersen said that, as he understood it from his meetings with Hizballah leaders, Iran gives clear instructions to Lebanon's Shi'a on religious issues. Although the extent of Iran's instructions for military operations was not clear to him, Pedersen said he believed Iran preferred that Hizballah appear as Lebanese as possible. He reminded A/S Silverberg that not all members of Hizballah were loyal to Iran, with some of Lebanon's Shia looking toward Iraq, not Iran, for leadership. In general, Hizballah tries to balance its strong links to Iran with a Lebanese agenda.

#### SHEBAA FARMS, SYRIA AND UNIFIL RENEWAL

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¶5. (C) On options for responding to the Government of Lebanon's request to resolve the issue of Shebaa Farms, Pedersen underscored the importance of delineating clearly what portion of Shebaa Farms was in dispute. He noted Prime Minister Fouad Siniora's strong pitch to resolve Shebaa as a first step towards disarmament of Hizballah. Pedersen recognized that without a clear sense of the area to be negotiated and without any guarantee that Hizballah would disarm, no one could expect Israel to respond positively. Shaikh noted three requirements to any negotiation over Shebaa: (1) Definition of the exact territory; (2) national

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consensus that would show that no more territory would be demanded; and (3) realism. The Ambassador emphasized that guaranteed disarmament would be imperative.

¶6. (C) The Ambassador re-iterated the importance of the international community's pressure on Syria. Pedersen agreed "we should keep pushing the Syrians." But, he cautioned, "we don't expect them to deliver. And then what do we do?" He assessed, however, that the Syrian regime was beginning to feel isolated. Pedersen argued that US should work on the Israelis to resolve long standing issues and proposed setting up steps and counter steps to build confidence and promote movement.

¶7. (C) On extending UNIFIL in July, Pedersen agreed we needed to include benchmarks in the next resolution to encourage the GOL to take more steps in asserting authority in the south. He hoped that the UNIFIL report itself could give the sort of details the UNSC could use.

¶8. (U) This cable has been cleared by A/S Silverberg.

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